

13 Sunday B

July 1, 2018

St. Patrick's

Theme: As Jesus became “poor for our sake,” we’re called as his disciples to be welcoming to the outsiders—in our time, especially immigrants.

These summer Sundays we’re hearing the Apostle Paul in one of his letters to the church in Corinth. St. Paul wants us to keep our focus centered on Jesus and what he calls his “**gracious act.**”

Paul then lays out what Jesus’ “**gracious act**” is. We heard of it today:

“For though Jesus was rich, he became poor for your sake, so that by his poverty, you might become rich.”

Jesus “**became poor,**” that we “**might become rich.**” You may have heard of what is called the “Prosperity Gospel.” It has taken hold of a growing swathe of Christianity in the United States. The “Prosperity Gospel” holds that financial blessings and wealth are always the will of God for Christians. There are many preachers of this “Prosperity Gospel,” and two who stand out are Joel Osteen and T.D. Jakes.

Although our church leaders have too often lived in wealth, the Catholic faith can have nothing to do with the “Prosperity Gospel.” In fact, Jesus emptied himself of all the divine prerogatives and became fully human—one with us, even to the point of suffering the disgrace of death on the cross. He lived poorly, as he said, “**The Son of Man has nowhere to rest his head**” (Luke 9:58). And because of that, we’ve become truly rich—not with a dollar sign like what the preachers of the “Prosperity Gospel” want us to believe. This is what St. John Chrysostom preached some 1600 years ago about this inspired teaching from St. Paul. Listen to St. John Chrysostom: “**For had not the Lord become poor, you would not have become rich. For this is the marvel, that poverty has made riches rich. And by riches here he (the Lord) means the knowledge of godliness, the cleansing away of sins, justification, sanctification, the countless good things which he bestowed upon us...**” (from his Homily XVII).

In the mid-1800s, they were called the “Know-Nothing Party.” At its peak, they included more than a hundred members of Congress and eight governors. The “Know-Nothings” were bitter opponents of immigrants coming to our eastern

shores from Europe. At that time, half of Ireland's population left their country in the face of famine, and Germans were escaping from political and economic hardships. All this was happening around the time of the founding of this parish—St. Patrick's, probably established to provide a church for them. These immigrants—especially the Irish—were portrayed as drunken criminals; and, because most were Catholics, they were seen also as subversive, aligned first of all to the pope (1).

These were the poor with whom Jesus identified—immigrants, yes, but also the homeless, as well as those in the grip of poverty and bigotry, including people of color who came to this country not freely, but enslaved. Jesus **“became poor for our sake.”** From that, St. Paul teaches the church that the needs of others and our abundance must be balanced out—in his words, **“that there may be equality.”**

St. Patrick's: These days in our nation and world are not our first rodeo.

Immigrants now are coming primarily through our southern borders. They are branded as rapists, murderers, and MS-13. Small children are now separated from their parents. Most who are coming also have Catholic roots. And they are vilified.

In my sitting room, next to my prayer chair, on the wall there hangs a painting done on papyrus, crafted in Egypt. A few years ago, an Egyptian family, who likewise emigrated from Egypt to our nation, gave me this painting of the Holy Family—Mary riding on a donkey, holding her infant Jesus, and Joseph, holding at the end of a pole a small bag with all their belongings. They were traveling to Egypt. They were refugees, immigrants. Herod wanted to kill their infant Jesus. They were fleeing. Can you imagine if, at Egypt's borders, they had been turned away and sent back to the land under Herod's control? Can you imagine the terror on the faces of Mary and Joseph as they returned to such danger for their child?

Friends: Am I touching upon politics? Sure I am, but only because all of this very much concerns the core of our faith. Throughout his five years as Bishop of Rome, Pope Francis has been consistent, again and again preaching on behalf of immigrants and refugees. Now, he's mainly a solitary voice on the world stage.

It's not one of those isolated lines from the Bible that we can delete. It's a recurring command God made first to the chosen people, and now to every age: **“You shall treat the alien who resides with you no differently than the natives**

born among you; you shall love the alien as yourself; for you too were once aliens in the land of Egypt. I, the Lord, am your God” (Leviticus 19:34).

Almost all of us in this great nation came from families who were once called foreigners.

St. Patrick’s: Keep first before us *our* faith and *our* story, as we reach out to those who yearn to make their story one of hope.



(1) See Paul Krugman, “Know-Nothings for the 21st Century,” in The New York Times (January 15, 2018), page A21.

General Intercessions

July 1, 2018

13th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Bring healing to our Diocese of West Tennessee, so that the Holy Spirit might lead us in our future together; we pray to you, O Lord—

Let your church be a place of welcome for the stranger, the outcast, the sinner, and the seeker; we pray to you, O Lord—

As we celebrate this week Independence Day, remove from our nation all bigotry and discrimination, that we might truly value all who are different from us, and live with “liberty and justice for all”; we pray to you, O Lord—

Protect military women and men, as well as all fire and police personnel: bring them to their homes safely; we pray to you, O Lord—

Relieve the pain of those who are ill or grieving; we pray to you, O Lord—

Embrace with your love all who have died, and give peace to their loved ones; especially as we remember Wils Davis (*and only for the*

11:00 a.m. Mass) and **William Seale, an infant child who went to the Lord fourteen years ago today; we pray to you, O Lord--**